

Mia Mia

ABORIGINAL HOUSING VICTORIA
MESSAGE STICK NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2015

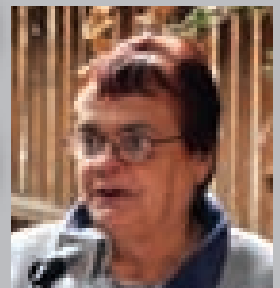


Owning and designing our housing

Preparing for Title Transfer to the
Aboriginal Community

FULL STORY page 3

Aunty Pat Ockwell honoured



AHV is thrilled at the news that highly respected Wurundjeri elder Aunty Pat Ockwell and lifelong fighter for better housing for Aboriginal Victorians has been included on the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll. **SEE PAGE 2.**

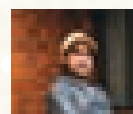
IN THIS EDITION

2



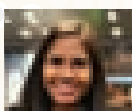
Chairperson's
Christmas message

6



A first tenant for our
new Bairnsdale property

5



Our Jessica runs the
New York Marathon

6

Where to find holiday season
community help



A Christmas message from the Chairperson



ON BEHALF OF ALL AT AHV I would like to wish all of our tenants a safe and happy Christmas. It has been a very busy year for AHV as we make plans for the future. A big part of this has been consultation with our tenants. We thank everyone who came to talk to us or gave us feedback in other ways.

We recognise Christmas can be a period of stress and if you are experiencing any issues that might be impacting on your family and your tenancy, please talk to your Housing Officer as soon as possible. We have provided information on page 6, about where to get help for other services over the Christmas period.

Thank you to all of our tenants for helping us to achieve our vision of secure housing as a pathway to better lives. We wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Tim Chatfield, Chairperson.



Our Holiday Season closing dates

THIS YEAR, AHV HEAD OFFICE will be closed for the holiday and festive season over the following dates: Friday, 25th December 2015 until Friday, 1st January, 2016. Reopening on Monday, 4th January, 2016.

If you have an emergency during closure dates, no need to worry, as our Maintenance Team will still be available throughout the holiday period. You can call us on our general Maintenance Lines - please refer to page 6 of this edition of Mia Mia.

Aunty Pat Ockwell inducted on to Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll

AUNTY PAT JOINS 64 OTHER ABORIGINAL Victorians inducted on the Honour Roll by the Victorian Government, in recognition of the real and lasting contribution to their communities.

"Aunty Pat was the Chairperson of Aboriginal Housing Victoria from 1996 to 2004. Her leadership helped establish the organisation to become the biggest Aboriginal housing provider in the country", said Tim Chatfield Chairperson of AHV.

"She is someone who always puts everyone else first, so it's very fitting that she is getting this recognition for her tireless work for her people.

"Aunty Pat has played a big part in the growth of AHV with her strong commitment to the organisation over many years and in many ways.

"She has helped to advocate for community members who are less fortunate than herself to provide them with safe, secure and stable homes. She has brought many Aboriginal housing issues to the attention of Board Members and Committee Members to enlighten them on the struggles that her community members are facing."

Aunty Pat has held positions with many organisations including the Aboriginal Community Elders Service, Dandenong Aboriginal Co-Operative and the Koori Children's Court.

She has been a member of AHV's Southern Regional Community Committee for 22 years, and a long-serving AHV Board Member and Chairperson.

"All of us at Aboriginal Housing Victoria congratulate Aunty Pat on this great honour and recognition for a lifetime of selfless work for Aboriginal people in this State", added Tim.

The Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll book is on permanent display in the Victorian Parliament and online at: www.dpc.vic.gov.au/vahr

Aunty Georgina Lovett-Williams and Aunty Cath Solomon also inducted

AHV would also like to congratulate former Board Member and Representative Committee Member for Northern and Eastern metro (1996-98), Aunty Georgina; and our long-standing Gippsland tenant, Aunty Cath, on their inductions for their valuable housing and community contributions.

Owning our own housing

Improving tenants' lives and creating employment.

DID YOU KNOW THAT AHV MANAGES over 1,500 properties for our 4,000 tenants? However, the State Government owns the majority of these properties.

A relatively small number of these houses are owned by AHV and we have responsibility for the maintenance of these properties.

When we own the properties we manage, we are able to bring about better results for our tenants. Beyond this, we are also able to create employment opportunities for Aboriginal tradespeople.



Recently we carried out works to a property in Melbourne's northern suburbs that required improvement. That work included a new kitchen bench top and cupboards, new vinyl flooring throughout the kitchen and hall areas - and a full repaint to freshen up the property.

It is now a fresh, bright and lovely home.

As well as improving quality of life for the tenants, we used the opportunity to employ the services of Koori tradies, namely Chris Morris Painting Services (featured in our photo), Axel Electrics (Alex Isailovic) and Jimmy Thorpe Plastering.

With the State Government soon to proceed with transfer of ownership of all AHV managed properties from mid next year, we will be in a position in the very near future to manage the maintenance and upgrades of more homes.



The gradual transfer of ownership to AHV will mean we can put in place a schedule for upgrades and maintenance that will prioritise the houses most in need, and generate even more employment opportunities for Aboriginal tradies and businesses in Victoria.

More than just a house

Designing homes for Aboriginal people that take culture and place into account.

A HOME IS MORE THAN JUST FOUR WALLS. For Aboriginal people, home is about a deep connection to place and somewhere for extended family and mob networks to gather.

In conjunction with architect Jefa Greenaway, of Indigenous Architecture and Design Victoria, AHV is developing principles to incorporate

Aboriginal cultural factors into house design.

In early 2016 (February/March) workshops will be held in metro and regional areas to discuss with tenants issues surrounding current housing, identify community aspirations and explore how future housing designs can be improved. The result of these discussions will be incorporated into future AHV developments.

"In the past, housing design was about a simple solution to the basic need of shelter - designed and built with little regard for cultural needs," AHV CEO Jenny Samms said.

"By giving consideration to cultural factors in future house design, we want to ensure that tenants feel more connected to their home."

The move to culturally appropriate design principles came out of AHV's consultations with tenants last year.

Jenny went on to say: "This is something we picked up during discussions with tenants. There was a concern that AHV houses weren't always practical and strong enough to meet tenants' needs."

"We also heard from tenants that current properties don't have an Aboriginal 'feel' to them. We want to make our housing flexible enough to accommodate visitors and family - and for the homes to have a 'look' that Aboriginal people feel they identify with and like.

"This could be in the colours a home is painted in, or other design features such as symbols that Aboriginal people can identify with - Wathaurong glass for example."

Architect Jefa Greenaway said the new design principles were about ensuring that housing is culturally responsive to the needs of the occupants.

"Too often in the past Aboriginal housing hasn't been particularly responsive to an Indigenous sensibility.

"We will embed an understanding that everything we do for Aboriginal people connects to sense of country and caring for country."

Resilience and environmental sustainability were also important. "We want our housing to be more durable, and designed in a way that keeps maintenance costs down for us, and energy costs down for our tenants," Jenny said.



Jefa Greenaway

Jefa explained the design principles would incorporate environmental sustainability.

"Aboriginal people were the first ecologists. We only took what we needed.

"When housing design responds to environmental sustainable design principles, you only use the resources that you need. It doesn't cost a cent more to orientate your house well, and it helps keep energy costs down."

The connection in the design principles would also extend to the outdoors.

"A number of our tenants also told us they want their gardens to be Indigenous to the local area, so we'll be incorporating bush landscaping into future designs," Jenny Samms said.

Jefa pointed out that including Aboriginal people in the development of housing would enable solutions that haven't been considered before to come into the mix.

"There is traditional knowledge we can draw upon. A lot of housing for Aboriginal people is poorly conceived and has not been executed in consultation. It has been a solution imposed on people, not done in partnership. Through discussions with tenants we'll tease out the details of what Indigenous design principles in housing looks like. Sometimes it's overt, such as a reference to the totem of that particular country. Or it could be a connection in subtle ways. How that manifests is part of the exercise in engagement and consultation we will undertake."

An important factor in designing Aboriginal housing is considering large and changing numbers of people.

"The key is to enable a high degree of flexibility. You need to adapt the space to expand and contract, for flexibility. Different zones - separating active and passive, or high use areas and quieter areas, and blurring the distinction between indoor and outdoor, are also part of it."

Jefa noted that better designed homes would create more of a sense of ownership.

"You can build an emotional connection to the house you are living in so it takes on a greater meaning. It ceases to simply be a functional need of shelter. It adds a strong sense of connection to culture, and it has the potential to be more than just a house," he said.

AHV's Jessica runs the New York Marathon

AHV COULDN'T BE PROUDER OF our very own Jessica Lovett-Murray who was selected to do the New York Marathon in early November.

Jessica - a Gunditjmara woman from South West Victoria - has been participating in the Indigenous Marathon for most of the year. It's through this program she has become the first Victorian Aboriginal woman to be selected to the New York Marathon.

As part of the Indigenous Marathon - which was founded by the great Robert de Castella - participants are required to compete in marathons throughout the year, including a 10 kilometre Canberra marathon, Gold Coast half

marathon (21 kms), the City to Surf (14 kms) and a 30 kilometre Alice Springs run.

The aim of the Indigenous Marathon is to help build strong leaders to go back into their community as role models, using their positive influence to foster more leaders in the future.

"Undertaking the Indigenous Marathon has made me stronger, more resilient, and able to overcome adversity," Jessica said.

"Natural talent only takes you so far. I kept pushing myself, and was consistent with my training. I want to be a positive role model, especially for my three year old son."



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Jenny echoed the importance of pride and a sense of ownership.

"We are hoping Aboriginal tenants will feel more proud of their house and of their neighbourhood - and feel it's a house they want to own," she said.

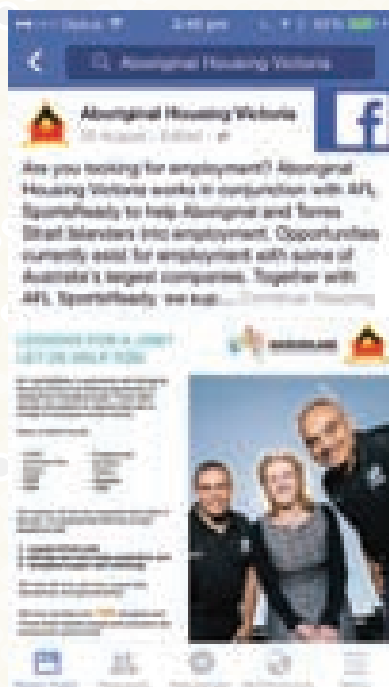
AHV is looking for tenants to participate in these workshops. If you or a family member is interested in the future of housing design at AHV and would like to be a part of the discussion please contact **Harriet Stone** at AHV on 03 9403 2100.

Share your news with us on Facebook

OUR FACEBOOK PAGE HAS now been up and going since mid year and we've been sharing many news items around new staff at AHV, job opportunities, cultural events and other achievements made by the Aboriginal Community across Australia.

Now it's your turn to share some news on Facebook with us!

We'd like to hear from you about personal or family achievements within the local or wider community. We'd like to hear from you about celebrations, events or stories



of interest - and we'd be honoured to post any related images to go with these.

So if you have a good news story you would like us to post, you can contact your Housing Officer directly, or just follow the "Message" button to submit via the AHV Facebook Page at: www.facebook.com/pages/Aboriginal-Housing-Victoria/751525064966762

And be assured that we are always mindful of our tenants privacy and confidentiality, so all your submissions are reviewed in advance of publication.

Our new Bairnsdale property makes tenant "happy on the inside"

AHV IS VERY PLEASED TO HAVE recently acquired a new property in Bairnsdale.

Director of Operations for AHV Des Rogers said the purchase would add to AHV's stock, and provide housing for a new tenant in a part of Victoria where there is high demand for social housing.

Des said the property is now a home for our new tenant, Eric, who had been couch surfing for some time before being found a home by AHV.

"After we purchased the home, we gave it a bit of a spruce up. We made improvements

to make it safer and more secure for a new tenant," Des said.

Housing Officer Deb Leon said that Eric had told her he was "very happy on the inside". We are very happy for you too, Eric!



Housing Officer, Deb Leon, hands over the keys to Eric.

Holiday season community help is at hand

For those tenants who may require a community helping hand during the Christmas and holiday season, we recommend some of the following valuable resources.

- Many councils offer Christmas assistance, such as hampers for low income residents and also provide dedicated services to the Aboriginal Community. Get in touch with your local council to see what's on offer.
- The Salvation Army Christmas appeal is on again this year, with sites around the state. For help you can contact your local Salvo services via this link: www.salvationarmy.org.au/vic or call 13 72 58 for general enquiries - for specialised services contact the Salvation Army Doorway on 1300 371 288.
- Centrelink can provide crisis payment and other financial assistance. You can contact your local Centrelink office for general

enquiries. To claim a Crisis Payment refer to: www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/crisis-payment or call 132 850 for further help.

- Other local sources such as Community Information Centres and Churches can also provide material assistance such as food vouchers and lend additional Christmas support to individuals and families.

For all your repairs and maintenance needs please call one of the following AHV Maintenance Lines:

General metro: (03) 9403 2166

Regional: 1300 664 392 (cost of local call)

**Emergency after hours:
(03) 9403 2171**